



in focus

STRENGTHENING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION OF NEPAL

Nepal achieved a political milestone this year when former Maoist combatants vacated their cantonments and began their integration into the Nepal Army. This momentum to further the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement appeared promising until the Constituent Assembly's term expired on May 27 without a constitution in hand. In the lead up to the Constituent Assembly's dissolution, Nepal experienced heightened tensions among ethnic groups, political parties, and government institutions. Nepalis are increasingly engaged in political activism, voicing their concerns locally and nationally. When dialogues and protests became divisive or on occasion, violent, USAID's activities to support alternative dispute resolution, political party negotiation, and consensus building at the community and national levels became all the more significant.

USAID/Nepal's Democracy and Governance programs work to strengthen effective citizen participation at the national and local level. At the national level, USAID supports government and political systems by building the capacity of key institutions such as the Election Commission, the CA, and political parties to become more democratic, inclusive, and effective. At the local level, USAID helps communities to effectively participate in development decision making and to foster linkages between citizens and their Village Development Committees and District Development Committees, as well as other local government entities. USAID's Democracy and Governance programs also strengthen government response and NGO services for one of Nepal's most vulnerable populations – Nepalis at high-risk for sex, labor, and other trafficking - and the survivors of those crimes.

SNAPSHOT: POLITICAL MILESTONES IN THE RECENT HISTORY OF NEPAL

2006: Second people's uprising against the Monarchy (led by the seven-party alliance and Maoists) and Signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

2007: Maoists join interim government taking former rebels into the political mainstream

2008: Constituent Assembly elections take place Nepal is declared a republic, and King Gyanendra dethroned. The first Nepali president is elected. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, leader of the Maoist rebel, is elected Prime Minister

2011: Regrouping of the Maoist combatants i.e. decisions are made regarding integration, rehabilitation, and voluntary retirement - an issue which had remained a key bottleneck in the peace process completion. Signing of the 7-point Agreement

2012: Demobilization of ex-combatants begins; voluntary retirees leave cantonment. More than 3,000 former PLA combatants expected to integrate into Nepal Army. Constitution Drafting deadline (fourth extension) not met and the Constituent Assembly dissolves. New elections proposed by the Prime Minister for November

Democracy & Development



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



As is apparent by the title, this edition primarily focuses on **USAID/Nepal's Democracy and Governance** programs. We highlight our key achievements in the past five years and give an overview of our ongoing projects. As part of our support to further the engagement of women, youth, and marginalized groups in progressive socio-political change, we are constantly seeking opportunities to understand their perspectives in order to better identify the core challenges faced by these groups. You can read excerpts from young leaders representing different political and social groups, highlighting their understanding of USAID's assistance to the democracy and governance sector in Nepal. Also, do read about Kamala's remarkable journey from a young struggling girl to a confident woman pursuing higher dreams in 'Empowering Nepal's Future Leaders'.

Sheila Lutjens, Deputy Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE PROGRAM'S KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- Assisted 12 VDCs to meet minimum conditions and performance measures to receive socio-economic Government of Nepal (GON) grants
- Funded program production, equipment of 40 regional FM Radio stations in remote areas to reach **6 million listeners** and supply civic education and health radio programming
- Trained **43,000 youth** as mediators in 9 conflict-stricken districts

Anti-Trafficking In Person

- **2,000 Trafficking-in-Person (TIP) survivors** and at-risk youth/women participated in non-traditional vocational skills training for gainful employment
- Supported the GON-NGO anti-TIP National Plan of Action, National Minimum Standards, and Standard Operating Procedures

Peace Process

- Since 2006, supported the work of mediators and facilitators to political parties to negotiate peace process, constitution drafting, elections planning, and power sharing
- Produced **40 million ballots** with the Elections Commission of Nepal (ECN) for the 2008 elections through funds, equipment and technical assistance
- Over the last year registered **10 million voters** through joint outreach with ECN and donors
- Since 2009 provided GON, NGOs and donors bi-monthly district-level survey results of people's views from across 74 districts on the peace process



Combating Trafficking-in-Persons (CTIP)

Goal: *Reduce Trafficking-in-Persons and protect the rights of victims*

USAID's CTIP project takes a holistic approach to address the prosecution and prevention of trafficking in persons and the protection of those trafficked. The CTIP project builds the capacity of law enforcement and the judiciary to effectively apply the TIP Act for prosecution and prevention. The project is implemented in six trafficking-prone districts, identified by the GON as source, transit and exit districts.

Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes (SPPELP)

Goal: *To build a more stable and peaceful democracy in Nepal*

The Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes (SPPELP) program supports political parties, electoral institutions, legislative processes and civil society organizations to promote a more stable and peaceful democracy in Nepal. The program includes a variety of activities to restore citizen confidence in democratic processes and institutions and promote greater political participation by marginalized populations.

Monitoring the Peace Process and Constitution Drafting

Goal: *A consolidated post-conflict democracy in Nepal*
USAID, with other donors, supports the Carter Center (TCC) in observing Nepal's ongoing peace process, constitutional process, and voter registration process. TCC deploys teams of international and Nepali long-term observers (LTOs) to each of Nepal's five development regions with the objective of monitoring the country's progress toward a consolidated post-conflict democracy. LTOs then share their findings with Constituent Assembly members and other national and international stakeholders.

USAID'S ONGOING SUPPORT TO DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE SECTOR IN NEPAL

Nepal Peace Support Project (NPSP)

Goal: *Advance Nepal's Peace Process*

Since 2005 USAID's Nepal Peace Support Project (NPSP) has provided assistance to peace process negotiations, actors, and institutions. In its current phase, NPSP supports the Nepal Transition to Peace (NTTP), an informal forum created among the second and third tier political party leaders to allow confidential dialogue for building trust and confidence between the political parties. The NTTP

Forum continues to be used extensively by the parties to negotiate compromises on challenges to the peace process.



IN THEIR OPINION:

Here's a highlight of young political leaders' perspective on the way forward for Nepali youth and USAID for strengthening the democratic transition of Nepal:



"USAID has been supporting the development of Nepal since a very long time, and we are all thankful for that. The only concern is that USAID programs are more focused at the Central level. Equal efforts should be given to reach out to people at the village and rural districts level as well. We have a lot of young and capable community leaders who, given the right platform and trainings, can bring the much needed direction in the political and social landscapes of Nepal. USAID can play a significant role in educating people about federalism because a lot of misconstrued conceptions about it are floating around. A sense of communal suspicion has been created, further deepening the conflict between various political and ethnic factions. An environment of open dialogue has to be created to pave the way for mutual social and political harmony." - **Dilli Chaudhary, Backward Society Education (BASE)**

"The focus should be on educating youth about the meaning and values of what democracy and freedom really entails. These two are fundamental elements required for any development process. Today's Nepali youth are increasingly being misled and desensitized to violence. Education builds the foundations for good citizenship, respect, democratic values, and tolerance of opinions. It enlarges people's horizons and breaks down prejudices. Youth, women and other marginalized groups are often sidelined when it comes to the decision-making process. USAID has worked towards the empowerment of women and youth through various programs and should continue to do so by further equipping future leaders with the non-violent means to resolve conflict and tension. The core values of democracy will be strengthened when women and youth are given opportunities to prove themselves in the political platform." - **Laxmi Pariyar, Nepali Congress**



"Nepal can learn a lot from the oldest democracy in the world, the United States. Amidst the ongoing political turmoil, USAID can play a crucial role in ensuring an environment of harmony, unity, transparency, and accountability within political parties. It is going to be a huge loss for the donors who have not only invested millions of rupees but also endless amounts of time and effort on the constitution building process. Furthermore, without the constitution the entire Nation is at a loss. The Constitution should be the number one priority of the entire nation especially when 95 percent of the work has already been completed. We should all put up a united effort ensuring equal voices from all sectors particularly that of youth and openly embrace new changes. Only then can we have a true New Nepal." - **Uma Kant Chaudhary, Nepali Congress**



"USAID's assistance to Nepal in strengthening its democratic institutions is really commendable. But foreign donors like USAID have to be cautious about treating Nepal's problems in one basket because of our multi-ethnic, religious, and regional spectrum. We should get rid of the old mentality that is detrimental to social progress. The youth of Nepal is frustrated and seeking greener pastures in foreign lands. They are aware of the problems facing our country and given a chance they would be ready to change the political condition of the country for the better. The country desperately needs some young leaders who personify diligence, open-mindedness, and new change. By exploring the linkages between economic development and



entrepreneurship in developing countries like Nepal, USAID should work towards the creation of entrepreneurial ventures. We can hope for larger impact on a national scale by educating the youth the skills and concepts necessary to become effective entrepreneurs. Young people are more than just a conduit for political change: as future leaders and entrepreneurs they are a powerful force for economic development." - **Rabindra Adhikari, CPN-UML**

"USAID is doing a great job by implementing various programs that support the democratic processes of Nepal. However, these programs should be more youth-oriented with stronger participation from marginalized and excluded groups. Often times, these groups are unaware of



these existing opportunities. USAID has done a lot towards the empowerment of women but the question is which groups of women have actually benefitted from the programs? Is it usually the same group of people or has there been an effort to reach out to needier and more deprived groups? Also, we feel that USAID should directly consult the beneficiaries and examine their actual needs instead of imposing pre-designed programs onto them. Programs can be really effective and sustainable if they take on a 'consultative' approach of not just experts but also people for whom the programs are being designed. This allows a healthy environment of beneficiaries' feeling an 'ownership' of these programs," - **Lucky Sherpa, CPN-UML**

EMPOWERING NEPAL'S FUTURE LEADERS



As a young girl growing up in Baitadi, one of the most isolated and impoverished districts of Far Western Nepal, Kamala Bohora constantly battled poverty, harsh prejudice, and despairing loneliness. With an absent father and a mother working all her days in the fields, Kamala struggled to fend for herself and her brothers. Furthermore, she was taunted by the villagers because of her mother's illiteracy and native dialect that didn't belong to the village. It was this very poverty and discrimination that drove Kamala to seek solace and hope in the arms of the Communist Party Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), one of the largest political parties of Nepal. Impressed by Kamala's passion and commitment to learn, Kamala's party selected her to participate in the USAID-funded National Democratic Institute's (NDI) ground-breaking **Future Leadership Academy (FLA)**.

More than half of Nepal's population is under the age of 35. The Political Party Development Program of National Democratic Institute (NDI) developed the FLA as part of

the Institute's initiative to engage the country's young leaders. This group represents a significant force for democratic change but lacks the ability to translate their ideas and dreams into concrete action. "These young people are eager to take the helm," says Senior Country Director Mark Wallem, "but they need some help. They are tired of the status quo and are keen on making changes."

"I want to see a constitution that will promote development for our nation and prosperity for future generations. I want to see peace."

The FLA provides assistance via a two intensive residential trainings that focus on political leadership, communication skills and internal party democracy. Through a series of workshops, the party youth grasp essential elements and functions of a democratic political party.

Upon completion of the training, graduates take back to their parties and communities valuable leadership lessons and tools that

improve negotiation capabilities, develop policy-making skills and methods to increase accountability and transparency. NDI Political Party Director Sasha Pajjavic says, "And we want them to develop networks—not only within their own parties but with other parties too. We want to get them talking."

Trust between the various political parties is fragile and easily breached. It is critical that parties find platforms where both inter-party and intra-party dialogue is encouraged and facilitated. In fact, it is open communication that participants perhaps value the most. "I am so happy to be here and talking face-to-face with people from other parties," says Kamala Limbu. Originally from Eastern Nepal but now living in Kathmandu, Limbu has a degree in Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and has been a member of the United Communist Party Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) for 16 years.

Limbu's open attitude is remarkable considering the personal suffering she endured as a result of Nepal's political unrest. During the insurgency, her husband was captured by the army and went missing, leaving her alone

to give birth to and raise the couple's son. "I am ready to move on. I want to see elections and a constitution—a constitution that will promote development for our nation and prosperity for future generations. I want to see peace," Limbu said.


Limbu is not alone in her aspiration for peace and development. "I am really enjoying being with so many young and enthusiastic people who want to see Nepal change," says Ajay Kumar Jha, a member of the relatively new Tarai Madesh Democratic Party (TMDP), it has a strong base in the struggling Terai Region of Nepal and strives to represent traditionally marginalized populations including Dalits,

Madheshis, women, youth and muslims.

Besides the group interactions and learning to work collectively, Jha says he appreciates the nature of the workshops themselves. "Our Parties give trainings that are almost entirely based on party's ideology. But NDI's training is based on real skills that we need to learn, that we can use and show others how to use."

Kamala Bohora is not shy about dreaming big. "I want to be a federal minister," she says. "I want to put an end to all the injustice prevalent in Nepali society."

On June 4, the USAID-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) launched the Future Leadership Academy (FLA) - Phase I. The FLA trained 53 talented political party members, 27 women and 26 men, ages 18-35 from across 31 districts and nine political parties. Apart from developing cross-party relationships, the FLA will introduce and equip young party members with democratic values and political skills to apply within their parties throughout their careers. NDI will address needs identified in Phase I and visit them in FLA Phase II with the same participants from July 1 to 5 in Kathmandu.



NEWS IN BRIEF - JUNE 2012

USAID Hosts Nepal's First Summit on Mobile Financial Services: June 20th marked the opening of Nepal's first Mobile Financial Services Summit hosted by USAID's Nepal Economic Agriculture and Trade (NEAT) Activity program. The two-day summit brought together global business leaders in the field of mobile financial services to share international best practices and to catalyze a discussion of opportunities in the Nepal market. With speakers from leading mobile money implementations from around the world as well as local stakeholders, the goal of this conference was to provide a forum to exchange information about the direction mobile financial services is moving globally and find ways to incorporate lessons learned into the local context. Currently in Nepal, only 28% of households have access to bank accounts. However, mobile phone penetration rates, already at 37%, are growing rapidly, suggesting an opportunity to increase financial inclusion through mobile financial services and branchless banking. This Summit builds upon other activities initiated by the USAID NEAT Activity to promote the expansion of mobile financial services. USAID is a strong supporter of mobile financial services in Nepal and around the world. As emphasized by USAID/Nepal Deputy Mission Director, Sheila Lutjens, "For the 1.8 billion people with access to a mobile phone but not to a bank account, mobile money can be life changing. We hope to see that here in Nepal in the months and years ahead."



FWLD Facilitates Combatting Trafficking-In-Person (CTIP) Police Training of Trainers (ToT): The Asia Foundation's sub-grantee, Forum for Women and Local Development (FWLD), organized a CTIP ToT for police officers at the Nepal Police Academy, June 12-14. The 26 police officers, including seven women, came from the six CTIP target districts as well as other affected districts across the country. Developed by FWLD, the ToT curriculum covered the recently Government-approved Standard Operating Procedures for investigation and the National Minimum Standards for TIP Victim Care and Protection. These sessions included

basic information on the crime of human trafficking and the relationships between trafficking, migration, and smuggling. Significant attention was paid to the international and domestic legal frameworks to combat trafficking. The workshop covered police practices in evidence collection, use of scientific tools, and investigation and questioning in trafficking cases. The workshop also provided an orientation on victim and witness protection, and the newly established Minimum Standards on the rights of victims and survivors. As a result, the ToT class has an understanding of victim-centric investigation and better clarity on the operations for law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute TIP cases. The ToT created a pool of trainers for which CTIP will access to teach district-level trainings this summer. The new trainers also will be responsible for developing the capacity of colleagues to counter trafficking when they return to their district of origin.



INSIDE USAID/NEPAL



High Spirit Award:

TOM KRESS

For Leading the Program and Project Development Team and for a successful Joint Portfolio Review with the Government of Nepal